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ABSTRACT

The implications of building a career-oriented curriculum in the public schools are many: (1) inservice teacher training is needed; (2) the philosophy of teacher education must be compatible with that of education for careers; (3) careful coordination is required between the public school curriculum and the specialized occupational curriculum of the junior college; and (4) graduation requirements and accreditation need to be scrutinized. If career education is to be maximally effective, it must start at the beginning of a child's education, be continuous through his education, and provide opportunity for continuing education to update skills. The levels of career education are viewed as being a pyramid, with students making decisions about careers and needed training based upon broad exploratory experiences and counseling obtained through the program. As students narrow their choices about career selections, individual career experiences become more sophisticated and intensified. The concept on which the Mississippi career education program is based embraces four levels or stages: career awareness (grades 1-6), career exploration (grades 7-10), career preparation (grades 11-12), and continuing career preparation. The Mississippi Career Education Model K-12 is illustrated. (Author/SC)

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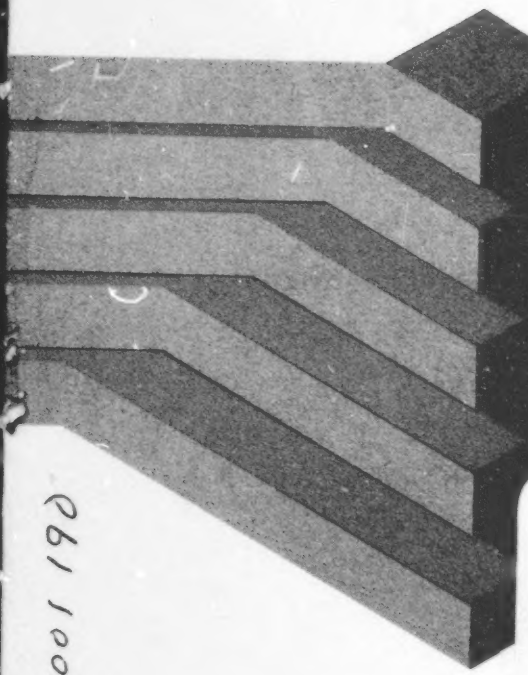
CAREER EDUCATION IN MISSISSIPPI



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CAREER EDUCATION IN MISSISSIPPI

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Early in 1970, President Nixon shared with leading educators in this country some very significant thoughts about the need for reform in the country's educational system. Apparently, he set in motion some real "soul searching" when he said:

> By demanding education reform now, we can gain the understanding we need to help every student reach new levels of achievement; only by challenging conventional wisdom can we as a nation gain the wisdom we need to educate our young in the decade of the seventies.

Speaking before the 1971 Convention of the National Association of Secondary School Principals in Houston, Texas, Dr. Sidney P. Marland, Jr., United States Commissioner of Education, suggested career education as appropriate education reform. He posed the question:

> Shall we persevere in the traditional practices that are obviously not properly equipping fully half or more of our young people, or shall we immediately undertake the reformation of our entire secondary education in order to position it properly for maximum contribution to our individual and national life?

Suggestions for education reform, coming from officials of no less stature than the President of the United States and the United States Commissioner of Education, found immediate acceptance and welcome by those of us who have long desired a new curriculum design in our schools. There are those of us who believe that it is time to break with tradition and build a truly preparatory school curriculum that serves all the school population. The need does not focus on the preparatory aspect of the curriculum per se. Rather, the needed emphasis is on the object of preparation. As a matter of fact, from the early days of our country's history we have had a preparatory school curriculum. Unfortunately, the object of preparation has been confined to a rather narrow swath of the total school population. History reflects that we have done well in preparing college bound students by exposing them to our public school curriculum. For 200 years we have written educational history in America. We have our scholars, our scientists, our engineers, and a host of other professionally trained people. Their record of service in our land speaks for itself. For the most part, it is a record unequalled in all the history of mankind. But the coin has another side. Too frequently, our eyes have been blinded by the glow and glitter of that on which we look with pride. Consequently, we have failed to see the beckon of a much larger army of people whose sights, for one reason or another, have never been aimed at higher education. Few would deny that the number of students who graduate from high school and then go on to acquire a college degree represents a relatively small percentage of the total. Thus, we can rightly question the appropriateness of our present public school curriculum.

A look at a typical high school graduating class might be rather revealing. Let us suppose there are 100 graduating seniors sitting before us. If we exclude home economics, only 15 of the 100 have been involved with

vocational education to the extent that they possess any semblance of a salable skill. At least 20 of the 100 will get a college degree. A little arithmetic reveals that this accounts for 35 of them. There continues to sit before us 65 graduates with no vocational training and who will not graduate from college. These 65 have, for 12 years, tangled with a school curriculum that has, for the most part, led to nowhere. This amounts to over 15,000 hours on a dead-end course for each of the 65. Altogether they represent three quarters of a million hours during which little or nothing has been done to solidify a career choice.

The tragedy of lost time becomes even more apparent when we ponder the fact that more persons are graduating from a four-year college with a bachelor's degree than there are jobs for degree holders. In fact, it has been projected by qualified authorities that by 1980, as many as 80% of the jobs in America will not require a baccalaureate degree.

May I hasten to say that our colleges and universities are now and will always be enormously important in our system of education. But it is a great disservice to many youngsters if they are repeatedly told and are convinced that college graduation is the one sure route to a bright future. It is not suggested that we diminish in any way our efforts to provide a school curriculum that adequately prepares youngsters to go to college. Rather, we must master the magic of maintaining a high level college preparatory program for those 20% of our youngsters who will acquire a college degree while being equally effective in providing for the needs of the other 80% who will not acquire a college degree.

This highly undesirable situation will continue so long as the public school curriculum is dominated by those who have traditionally held a rather limited view as to what constitutes an educated person. Because of this limited

view of education, the traditional school curriculum has contributed to the attachment of a false stigma to any segment of education that embraces skill training which leads directly to employment. The attitude of parents and the general public has been equally adverse to the concept that would enable youngsters to grasp training opportunities that might well lead to a future that could be both challenging and rewarding. Many parents, while applauding such education, express the attitude that it is a kind of education "for someone else's children."

From the beginning of time, tradition has played a vital role in the turn of events. Our country is no exception. Many of these traditions have become enshrined in our nation's history and have been a source of inspiration, causing men to rise above the ordinary and influence for good the destiny of America in its darkest hours. At the same time, there are other traditions which have simply been deterrents to the progress and well-being of our country.

In no area of life has a break with tradition come about more slowly than in the field of education. Since the coming of the pilgrims, our country has been inhabited largely by working people. Yet, these same people have harbored a deep rooted desire for a kind of education that is of a mental nature as opposed to training for work with the hands.

In a time when a lot of questions are being asked about our schools, we are, perhaps, on the brink of seeing the long awaited break with tradition. In the absense of workable solutions, educational leaders are beginning to cling somewhat loosely to traditions of the past while looking for alternatives as they consider the future. More and more educators are promoting new ideas and altered concepts that lean toward career preparation for a kind of student that has for too long been neglected.

The building of a career-oriented curriculum in the public schools will not be an easy achievement. This is true because its implications are many. Not the least among these is teacher preparation. First of all, there is the need for some retreading of teachers already in the field. Teachers at all levels will be required to "plow up" their subject area fields and sow them with new and exciting methods, techniques and media. It means a change in thinking so that preparation for a career becomes accepted as one of the clear and primary objectives of the secondary school.

Obviously, there will be some need for adjustments in the realm of higher education where the training and education of teachers is done. The philosophy of teacher education will have to be compatible with that of education for careers. It is highly probable that there will be a need for "training teacher trainers."

Because of the extensive involvement of the junior colleges in occupational education today, there is a great need for the public school curriculum and the specialized occupational curriculum of the junior college to be carefully coordinated. The public school curriculum must be designed so that it will be general enough to lead into an advanced post-secondary curriculum, yet specific enough to enable a student who will not enroll in a post-secondary curriculum to go to work with a job entry skill. We must avoid overlapping and duplication of occupational training content. We cannot defend the existence of a secondary public school occupational program and a post-secondary occupational program a few miles apart with the same thing being taught in both.

The incorporation of a career-oriented curriculum in our public schools will make it necessary for us to take a long scrutinizing look at accreditation, particularly as it applies to requirements for graduation. I do not believe we

can afford to consider a student who goes from high school directly into the world of work with a salable skill any less a high school graduate than we would consider one who went on to college. Yet, if we are realistic, we would admit that the two should not be exposed to the same course of study as they approached high school termination. In fact, it would seem to make sense that the nearer to secondary school termination students become, the more individualized their courses of study should become.

If education for a career is to be of maximum effectiveness, it must start at the very beginning of a child's education. It must be continuous in a properly sequenced manner until that child has gone through the educational gamut and is successfully established in a career. In fact, it must go beyond even the point of establishment in a career. Career education must provide opportunity for continuing education to update skills and/or to provide an opportunity to prepare for a new career. In order for this to be possible, provision must be made for re-entry into the educational system by those already established in the world of work.

The procedure views the levels of career education as being a pyramid, with students making decisions about careers and needed training based upon broad exploratory experience and counseling obtained through the program. As students narrow their choices about career selections, individual career experiences become more sophisticated and intensified.

The concept upon which the Mississippi career education program is based embraces four levels or stages. The four are (1) career awareness, (2) career exploration, (3) career preparation, and (4) continuing career preparation. The career exploration stage is divided into two degrees of involvement. In the early stages of career exploration, the effort must, of necessity, be on a wide

range basis involving the entire cross section of the world of work. As the student moves toward the time he will actually begin training for a career, the range of career exploration narrows into those careers compatible with his interests, aptitudes, and emotions. It may seem strange that emotions are listed and ranked along with aptitudes and interests as guides for successful placement in a career. Emotions are considered important, however, if we agree that aptitudes and interests, as determined by modern tests, do not provide insight as to the emotional compatibility of a man for a job or a job for man. Consequently, it is significant when we consider that the greater part of one's emotional life is spent with his or her job.

Career Awareness Stage

Under Mississippi's career education concept, the career awareness period spans grades one through six. The regular classroom teacher furnishes career awareness instruction by merely fusing or incorporating the career education concept into the ongoing school curriculum.

To accomplish this basic goal, local career education personnel provide basic services to the elementary faculties. These services include obtaining occupational information, providing counseling, and providing resource persons to be utilized by the elementary faculties. In addition, workshops, seminars, and field trips are held to assist the elementary faculties to incorporate career development into the regular instructional program.

Actually, the career awareness concept does not eliminate vital elementary school curriculum elements; nor does it propose to substitute career awareness for long established, professionally sound elementary curriculum

concepts. By contrast, fusing the career awareness concept into the ongoing curriculum enriches and adds quality to the school program.

As a child enters the first grade, his experiences in career education are centered around that with which he is most familiar — namely, the home and the school. The limited career information that the child possesses (such as his parents' jobs and those jobs he sees at school — teachers, school bus drivers,' etc.) is used as a basis for expanding his knowledge of the world of work. Parents and others are brought into the classroom to tell about their jobs. Children engage in such activities as career game playing, field trips, career art work, and similar experiences to increase their knowledge and understanding. The regular school subjects (reading, writing, etc.) are utilized as the vehicle for presenting career information as opposed to concentrating it in a special subject area.

In the second grade, the presentation of career information increases as the child's world increases in size. The career focus is broadened to the point that occupations existing in the neighborhood are included in the ongoing curriculum. The child begins to develop an understanding of the fact that many types of workers are necessary. A proper attitude and appreciation for work is stressed, and children begin to list and relate duties or chores they perform at home and how these help the home. They also begin developing the knowledge of working willingly as members of a group. Career activities in which the children participate are correlated with their regular school subjects.

The third grade expands the child's career focus to life within the expanding community. Occupations found within the community to which children have not been exposed in either the first or second grades are brought into

focus. As children's reading skills increase, career information is presented through basic and supplementary readers. Additional action type activities dealing with careers are introduced to the children.

As the elementary students progress to grades four through six, emphasis is placed upon students' enhancement of self-concept as related to career development. In the fourth grade, students encounter occupations found in other communities within the state. During the fifth grade, occupations not commonly found within the state are brought into focus. The students in the sixth grade center attention upon occupations found in foreign countries. During the fourth through sixth grades, the students engage in activities designed to increase their awareness of the world of work. These activities are many and varied and are far too numerous to enumerate.

Career Exploration

The career exploration stage of career education, as currently structured, in Mississippi spans grades seven through ten. This stage might well be described as embracing three sequentially related sub-stages.

In grades seven and eight, clusters of careers are explored on a very broad basis. An intensive guidance and counseling program is carried on to assist students in discovering their career interests and aptitudes. Students are observed to determine their emotional compatibility with the various careers for which they may express an interest or indicate an aptitude.

In grade nine, the career exploration thrust narrows to a few career clusters selected on the basis of student interests, aptitudes, and emotions as determined during the

more broad-based exploration of careers during grades seven and eight. It is at this point that "hands-on" experiences become more intense. Individual instruction becomes essential, and teachers find themselves more fittingly "managers of learning" as opposed to teachers presenting the same lesson to the entire class group. Guidance and counseling continues with emphasis toward placement of students in career clusters compatible with their interests, aptitudes, and emotions.

As the student moves into grade ten, hopefully, he has identified a single career cluster which he will now explore in as much depth as he possibly can. Student exposure to science, math, language arts, and social studies is managed in such a way as to relate these traditional and important components of the school curriculum to the career cluster he is exploring. Obviously, classroom teachers will utilize the magic of individual instruction as a frequently used technique of teaching. Guidance and counseling continue at this point with new refinement as the student moves very close to the career that may well influence the remainder of his life along with that of countless others who are vastly important to him. Occuaptional orientation, a course implemented in many of the schools of Mississippi as a means of meeting the requirements of the Vocational Amendments of 1968, is being utilized to great advantage in supporting the career exploration phase of the program.

Remedial education is utilized to aid students with scholastic difficulties at the junior high level and above. These classes are designed to assist students in reaching their educational and/or occupational goals.

Preparation

The preparation phase of the career education program begins with grade eleven and ends, in so far as secondary preparation is concerned, when the youngster exits from school. This may be (1) at a time when he enters the world of work with a salable entry level skill prior to graduation from high school, (2) at the time of graduation from high school when he enters the world of work with a salable skill or moves into a post-secondary technical program for further skill development, or (3) at the time of graduation from high school when he enrolls in a baccalaureate program. Students receive assistance in planning for and attaining vocational goals and preferences either in the form of additional vocational training or work experience.

Preparation is accomplished through utilization of the ongoing vocational education programs. Training for the career cluster or, perhaps, the specific career of the youngster's choice may be accomplished in one of the occupational training programs housed in the vocational complex. Normally, such occupational education programs as agriculture, auto mechanics, building trades, consumer home economics, general metal trades, industrial drafting, industrial electricity, and office occupations are offered in the area vocational complex. Other youngsters are involved in co-op programs where a local business or industry is utilized as a training laboratory.

Through well-planned individual instruction, subjects such as math, science, language arts and social studies are related to the career for which the youngster is preparing. Thus, the student should be endowed with a new degree of motivation to learn because his studies are related to that in which he is most interested.

An intensive guidance and counseling program is continued with the primary objective being to prepare youngsters for employment and/or further education.

A concerted remedial program is operated in conjunction with the career education program for students who are identified as potential dropouts. This remedial program equips potential dropouts with competence and skills necessary for pursuing further vocational training in keeping with their career objectives.

The career-centered concept is enhanced by the availability of extensive vocational-technical training available through an area post-secondary school. Most vocational programs at the junior colleges are open-ended and accept students at any level provided they can make progress in the occupational training programs. Offerings available in the post-secondary facilities include: forestry, horticulture, livestock technology, distribution and marketing, and supermarket training, practical nursing, data processing, secretarial science, building construction technology, drafting and design, electronics technology, mechanical technology, air conditioning and refrigeration, auto mechanics, horology, machine shop, radio and television repair, and welding.

Continuing Education

A program of continuing education is available to offer those who have left school, either by dropping out or by graduation, an opportunity to re-enter the system for updating skills they possess or to acquire new skills. For all practical purposes, training methods and opportunities for those in this category are the same as for those youngsters who have not yet entered the world of work. In effect, the continuing education program is always available for use by anyone who needs to re-enroll for further training. It

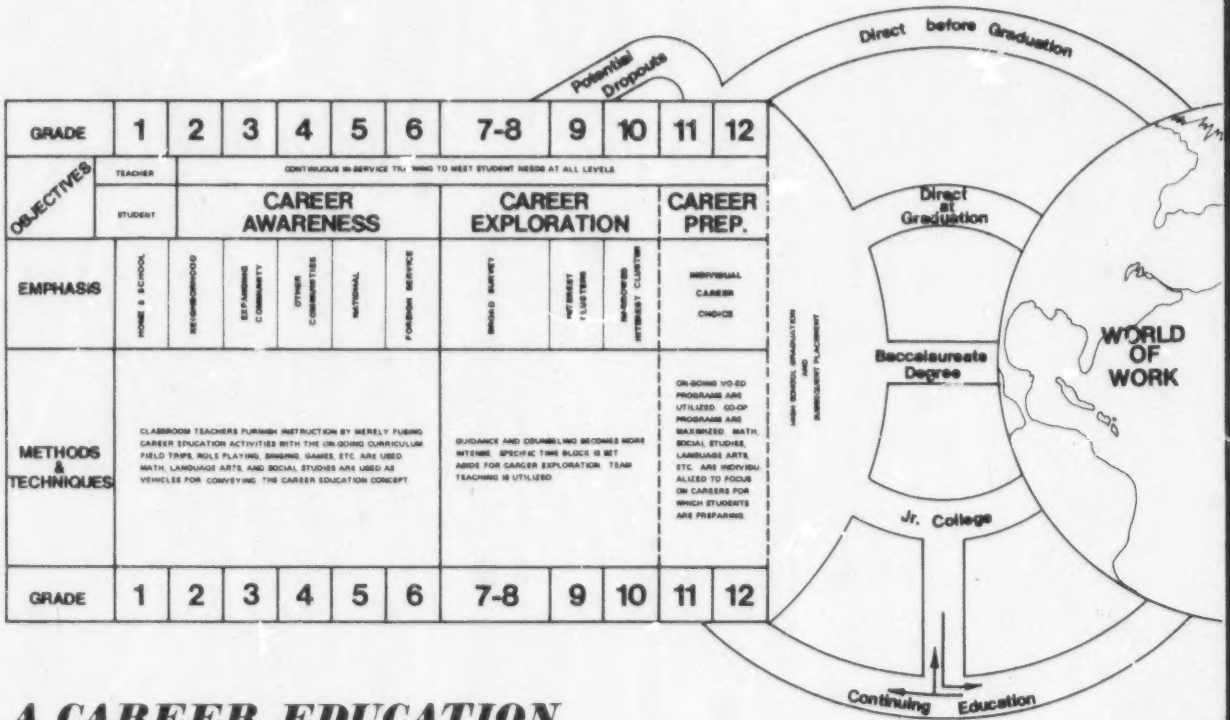
makes no difference if enrollees are four-year college graduates or school dropouts anywhere along the way. Of necessity, training programs must be open-ended so that a trainee can enter at any time he realizes a need for training and exit at any time it is felt that his training has become adequate.

Short-Term Intensive Training for Potential Dropouts

When it becomes evident that a youngster is on the verge of dropping out of school before he has reached the preparation stage of the career education program, he is moved into a short-term intensive training program so that he may acquire at least a minimal skill before leaving school. Such youngsters are discovered and referred only after careful observation and counseling by teachers and counselors. Training is offered through existing programs, with the youngster being given individual attention and special assignments.

Career Education Model

The Career Education Model shown on page 14 graphically depicts the concept upon which the career education movement in Mississippi is based. It should be noted that after grade 6 the model affords a great amount of flexibility. No attempt is made to draw a fine line of division between career exploration and career preparation. This is true because experience teaches that some youngsters may be ready for moving into the preparation phase prior to attaining the eleventh grade level. On the other hand there may be others who will still be exploring as late as grade twelve.



A CAREER EDUCATION MODEL K-12

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

J.H. Stallings, Coordinator
CAREER EDUCATION PROGRAMS